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C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 000439

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF AND AF/E

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/14/2007

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SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI REQUESTS ASSISTANCE IN SUPPORT OF OCTOBER 2004 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

REF: DJIBOUTI 269

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MARGUERITA D. RAGSDALE.
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) Minister of Interior Abdoulkader Doualeh Waiss convoked Ambassador 3/20 to ask for U.S. assistance in Djibouti's preparations for its first-ever municipal elections slated for October, 2004. Department will note that Embassy put forward in reftel a case for Economic Support Fund (ESF) backing of Djiboutian election preparations -- both municipal (referred to locally as "regional") in 2004 and presidential in 2005. Waiss's request is the first, formally, from the government.

2. (C) The Interior Minister said Djibouti would be interested in inviting international organizations, the European Union, and African Union and the Arab League, plus ambassadors and journalists in country to track the progress of municipal elections. The aim is to provide reassurance regarding the transparency of Djibouti's electoral system. He noted the role played by the country's Constitutional Council, which tracks elections and assures normal electoral procedures, and its National Independent Electoral Commission, composed of jurists, civil society and representatives of political parties with a similar mandate.

3. (C) The Minister noted previous U.S. assistance to Djibouti for electoral assistance. Specifically, the U.S. allotted in FY-02 the sum of USD 500,000 in ESF to support parliamentary and local elections. (Comment: All but USD 68,000 was eventually obligated and spent. Embassy Djibouti awarded the remaining USD 68,000 to the Djiboutian League for Human Rights to conduct a voter education program on decentralization and voter rights. End comment.)

4. (C) Ambassador told Waiss that she would be pleased to raise his request with Washington. In support of that request, she asked that he give thought to anticipated needs and provide a list of minimum requirements. Waiss promised to provide the document later in the week. We will convey to Washington Djibouti's indications. AID Director Schulman is also exploring with appropriate AID units, possible democracy and governance programs, if available.

RAGSDALE